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ABSTRACT

This document systematically studies the status of Native education in the United States and makes recommendations for improving the quality of education for American Indian and Alaska Native students. Based on extensive testimony by citizens and educators, school site visits, and commissioned papers by experts, the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force identified four reasons why Indian nations are at risk as a people: (1) failure of schools to educate large numbers of Indian students; (2) erosion of Native languages and cultures; (3) threats of further reduction of Native lands and natural resources; and (4) challenges to Indian self-determination and governance by changing federal policies and court decisions. Following a review of Native enrollments, funding for Native education, the changing context of Native education, barriers to success for Indian students, and progress in research and educational practices, the Task Force presents a strategic framework for improving schools. Major strategies are: (1) developing comprehensive education plans that uses federal, state, local and tribal resources; (2) developing local partnerships for schools; (3) emphasizing national priorities related to parent-based early childhood education, promotion of tribal language and culture, training of Native teachers, and strengthening of tribal community colleges; (4) creating mechanisms of accountability; and (5) fostering understanding of the relationships between tribes and government. Specific recommendations are outlined for parents, educators, Native communities, and governmental bodies, as well as priorities for additional funding, research, and higher education. This report contains 12 notes, 60 references, a list of 21 commissioned papers, and descriptions of 13 model programs and successful practices in American Indian education. (SV)

Indian Nations At Risk:

An Educational Strategy for Action

ED339587

RC018443



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National Education Goals for American Indians and Alaska Natives

Using the President's six National Education Goals as a foundation, the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force established a set of education goals to guide the improvement of all federal, tribal, private, and public schools that serve American Indians and Alaska Natives and their communities:

GOAL 1: Readiness for School

By the year 2000 all Native children will have access to early childhood education programs that provide the language, social, physical, spiritual, and cultural foundations they need to succeed in school and to reach their full potential as adults.

GOAL 2: Maintain Native Languages and Cultures

By the year 2000 all schools will offer Native students the opportunity to maintain and develop their tribal languages and will create a multicultural environment that enhances the many cultures represented in the school.

GOAL 3: Literacy

By the year 2000 all Native children in school will be literate in the language skills appropriate for their individual levels of development. They will be competent in their English oral, reading, listening, and writing skills.

GOAL 4: Student Academic Achievement

By the year 2000 every Native student will demonstrate mastery of English, mathematics, science, history, geography, and other challenging academic skills necessary for an educated citizenry.

GOAL 5: High School Graduation

By the year 2000 all Native students capable of completing high school will graduate. They will demonstrate civic, social, creative, and critical thinking skills necessary for ethical, moral, and responsible citizenship and important in modern tribal, national, and world societies.

GOAL 6: High-Quality Native and non-Native School Personnel

By the year 2000 the numbers of Native educators will double, and the colleges and universities that train the nation's teachers will develop a curriculum that prepares teachers to work effectively with the variety of cultures, including the Native cultures, that are served by schools.

GOAL 7: Safe and Alcohol-Free and Drug-Free Schools

By the year 2000 every school responsible for educating Native students will be free of alcohol and drugs and will provide safe facilities and an environment conducive to learning.

GOAL 8: Adult Education and Lifelong Learning

By the year 2000 every Native adult will have the opportunity to be literate and to obtain the necessary academic, vocational, and technical skills and knowledge needed to gain meaningful employment and to exercise the rights and responsibilities of tribal and national citizenship.

GOAL 9: Restructuring Schools

By the year 2000 schools serving Native children will be restructured to effectively meet the academic, cultural, spiritual, and social needs of students for developing strong, healthy, self-sufficient communities.

GOAL 10: Parental, Community, and Tribal Partnerships

By the year 2000 every school responsible for educating Native students will provide opportunities for Native parents and tribal leaders to help plan and evaluate the governance, operation, and performance of their educational programs.

Indian Nations At Risk: An Educational Strategy for Action

Final Report of the
Indian Nations At Risk Task Force

U.S. Department of Education

October 1991

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October 1991

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The Indian Nations At Risk Task Force submits this report, *Indian Nations At Risk: An Educational Strategy for Action*, as part of a national effort to improve the quality of education for America's students. Although the Task Force's effort predates AMERICA 2000, its call for the comprehensive transformation of Native education parallels the strategies you propose for the entire nation.

The Task Force is convinced that this report, specifically addressing the educational needs of Native America (American Indians and Alaska Natives), will lead to significant improvement in the academic performance of Native students if fully implemented.

The Task Force identified four important reasons the Indian Nations are at risk as a people: (1) Schools have failed to educate large numbers of Indian students and adults; (2) The language and cultural base of the American Native are rapidly eroding; (3) The diminished lands and natural resources of the American Native are constantly under siege; and (4) Indian self-determination and governance rights are challenged by the changing policies of the administration, Congress, and the justice system.

The Task Force believes that a well-educated American Indian and Alaska Native citizenry and a renewal of the language and cultural base of the American Native community will strengthen self-determination and economic well-being and will allow the Native community to contribute to building a stronger nation—an America that can compete with other nations and contribute to the world's economies and cultures.

This report includes the major educational findings reported in the Native testimony, recommends five major research-based strategies for addressing educational needs, and presents a comprehensive set of recommendations that are responsive to the complexities of improving schools and schooling.

This report recommends a broad-based initiative to improve the quality of education for American Natives. It is a model of what can be done for the entire nation. Basic to this strategy is the need to join in partnership with parents, school officials, tribal leaders, and policymakers. Each of us

has a critical role. The Task Force calls on you to exercise your leadership as Secretary of Education to guide this initiative.

The Task Force urges you to implement those recommendations that you have the authority to adopt, to recommend to the United States Congress specific legislation for those recommendations that will require additional authority, and to propose budget increases for several priority areas. We particularly recommend support for new early childhood education and parent training programs, support for teacher education and other professional training for larger numbers of American Indian students and adults, support for Indian community colleges, and the development of new and exemplary education projects designed to carry out school improvement recommendations to meet the unique cultural and academic needs of Native students.

The issues facing Native communities and Native education in the United States are similar to issues facing Native populations worldwide. In effectively responding to these issues, we can offer model solutions to a world that is becoming increasingly culturally diverse yet interdependent.

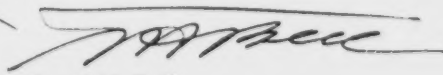
The Indian Nations At Risk Task Force would like to thank you for your support, to commend the foresight of your predecessor in initiating this work, and to acknowledge the excellent staff assigned to work with the Task Force in the preparation of this report.

We believe that the report accurately presents the current status of American Native education, captures the essence of the measures that the researchers and the Native community have identified as necessary to improve schools, and makes sound recommendations. We welcome the opportunity to work with you as you move forward with the recommendations.

Respectfully,



William G. Demmert, Jr.
Cochairman



Terrel H. Bell
Cochairman

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Indian Student Bill of Rights

The Indian Nations At Risk Task Force believes that every American Indian and Alaska Native student is entitled to:

- ❖ A safe and psychologically comfortable environment in school.
- ❖ A linguistic and cultural environment in school that offers students opportunities to maintain and develop a firm knowledge base.
- ❖ An intellectually challenging program in school that meets community as well as individual academic needs.
- ❖ A stimulating early childhood educational environment that is linguistically, culturally, and developmentally appropriate.
- ❖ Equity in school programs, facilities, and finances across Native communities, and in schools run by the federal government and public schools in general.



Federal Responsibility for Native Education

The Constitution of the United States provides for a special political relationship between American Natives and the U.S. Congress. This relationship includes broad federal authority and special trust obligations. Congressional authority over Indian affairs is generally recognized as emanating from the Indian Commerce Clause and treaty-making responsibility.

Federal Indian education policy began during President Washington's time in 1792 with the Seneca Nation, as part of the government's historical policy of trying to "civilize" the American Indian. The United States included educational provisions in treaties starting in 1794 with the Oneida, Tuscarora, and Stockbridge Indians, and extending through the treaty-making period ending in 1871. The practice of providing for technical or vocational education and of providing financial support for reservation schools, boarding schools, and other educational programs was formalized in 1921 by the Snyder Act. This legislation gave broad authority to the Bureau of Indian Affairs to spend federal money to educate and generally support the acculturation of Indians.

Although treaty obligations are still in force, the trust responsibility and commitment to provide services depend on Congressional action. This responsibility, recognized as legal and moral, is one that Congress has extended to both tribes and individuals over time, by setting aside special funding for Indians in programs for a variety of educa-

tion, health, social service, economic development, and other legislation. This practice has also expanded authority for providing services for Indians from the Department of Interior to other federal agencies.

States have used this special political relationship between tribes and the federal government as an excuse for not honoring their responsibilities to American Natives as citizens. They have withheld health and social services and have not fully provided critical educational services.

As citizens of the United States, American Indians and Alaska Natives are entitled to participate in all federal and state programs that other citizens are entitled to, including educational services, and cannot be discriminated against because of their ethnic origin. Unfortunately, some Native students have experienced discrimination and lack of educational opportunity, and our schools have failed large numbers of Native children. Because of this failure and because of provisions in the U.S. Constitution and treaty-making authority of the U.S. Congress, the federal government—particularly the U.S. Department of Education—is seeking to improve the quality of education and the academic success of American Indian and Alaska Native students. A variety of federal studies have documented the educational problems that American Indian and Alaska Native students have encountered; as a result, legislation has been designed to correct those problems.

Foreword

The Indian Nations At Risk Task Force was chartered on March 8, 1990, by the U.S. Department of Education in the Historic Shawnee Methodist Mission in Kansas. The Task Force was charged with studying the status of Native education in the United States and with issuing a report and recommendations to set the stage for improving the quality of educational institutions that American Indian and Alaska Native children attend and for improving the academic performance of those students who are being poorly served by their schools. Named as co-chairmen of the Task Force were former U.S. Secretary of Education Terrel Bell and Alaska Commissioner of Education William G. Demmert, now a visiting professor at Stanford University.

The Task Force received testimony from tribal leaders, parents, educators, and many others to gain an in-depth understanding of current conditions and to identify desired changes. The Task Force formulated its recommendations, based on research, testimony, and advice from many sources, including the following:

- ♦ Testimony from hundreds of citizens at regional hearings in Alaska, Arizona, Minnesota, Montana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Washington and through more than 200 papers and statements of concern.
- ♦ Some 30 school site visits and interviews with more than 100 parents, school board members, superintendents, teachers, tribal and spiritual leaders, and others.
- ♦ Thirty-two special sessions with over 500 participants at the National Indian Education Association's annual



conference in cooperation with the National Advisory Council on Indian Education.

- ◆ Commissioned papers from national experts on Native education. These papers are included in a supplemental volume, available from the U.S. Department of Education.

At its first meeting the Task Force agreed on the following principles to guide its work:

- ◆ The United States has a responsibility to help Native governments and communities preserve and protect the Native cultures, which are found in no other part of the world.
- ◆ The educational strategies and reforms that will be needed to achieve Native educational goals must guide improvement in all schools that serve American Indian and Alaska Native students.
- ◆ Schools must provide enriching curricula and assistance that encourage students' personal best in academic, physical, social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual development.
- ◆ Parents, Elders, and community leaders must become involved in their children's education, in partnership with school officials and educators. They must participate in setting high expectations for students, influencing the curriculum, monitoring student progress, and evaluating programs.
- ◆ A genuine commitment to real change will be required not only on the part of school systems, but also by federal, state, local, and Native governments; Native corporations; educational organizations; and business, labor, and community organizations.

This report is divided into three main parts. Part I explains why our Native peoples are at risk, describing the current situation and the background for it. Part II recounts recent progress in resolving the problems and

describes some proven practices for improving our schools. Part III describes the priorities and strategic framework established by the Task Force for improving the schools, and presents the group's recommendations for all the partners in the enterprise: parents of Native children, school officials and teachers, tribal governments and Native communities, local governments and schools, state governments, the federal government, and colleges and universities. The report ends with concluding remarks and an appendix containing concise descriptions of successful practices in Native education throughout the United States.

The Task Force hopes that this report will inspire the comprehensive changes needed to improve the life chances of American Indians and Alaska Natives. The Task Force hopes that the readers of this report will do their part to make positive, lasting, systemic changes to the schools that serve American Native students. After all, the survival of our tribes depends on it.

Part I: Why the Native Peoples Are at Risk



Nations at Risk

American Indian tribes and Alaska Native communities are nations at risk.

- ❖ Our schools have failed to nurture the intellectual development and academic performance of many Native children, as is evident from their high dropout rates and negative attitudes toward school.
- ❖ Our schools have discouraged the use of Native languages in the classroom, thereby contributing to a weakening of the Natives' resolve to retain and continue the development of their original languages and cultures.
- ❖ Indian lands and resources are constantly besieged by outside forces interested in further reducing their original holdings.
- ❖ Political relationships between the tribes and the federal government fluctuate with the will of the U.S. Congress and decisions by the courts.

The task challenging Native communities is to retain their distinct cultural identities while preparing members for successful participation in a world of rapidly changing technology and diverse cultures. Indian communities must choose their educational and cultural priorities for their children and future generations. American Indians and Alaska Natives must determine the school's role in promoting Native languages and cultures and the school's educational priorities. Natives must make a clear statement about what they expect of

their youth. If Natives and other Americans do not make these choices and follow through boldly, schools will continue to fail. The consequences will be severe for the economic achievement, social and cultural development, and intellectual growth of the American Indian and Alaska Native communities.

Background

There are approximately 1.9 million American Indians and Alaska Natives in the United States, with Navajos, Cherokees, and Alaska Natives representing the three largest groups. Of the total, between 300,000 and 400,000 Natives are of school age. Natives represent about 1 percent of the total student population in the United States and, because of their relatively small numbers, are often lost in reports about educational achievement and progress. Contrary to the public's image of Native children being taught in separate reservation schools, some 85 to 90 percent are educated in public schools. Another 50,000 attend schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Indian contract schools, or private schools (see Chart 1). In most states Natives account for a small share of the population, but they make up at least 9 percent of the public school enrollment in Alaska, Oklahoma, and New Mexico.

As part of its responsibility to Indian nations, in the 1989-90 school year, the BIA funded 166 schools. Of these, the BIA directly operated 94 schools: 53 elementary and secondary day schools, and 41 boarding schools. Tribes and tribal organizations under contracts and grants with the BIA operated 72 schools: 58 elementary and secondary day schools, 14 boarding schools. Also the BIA funded 14 dormitories (8 BIA-operated and 6 tribally contracted) that provide residential services to Native children who attend nearby public schools. Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute and Haskell Indian Junior College are two-year colleges

*"We tribal people
must structure the
education of our
children...."*

Rosemary Christensen,
Ojibwe¹



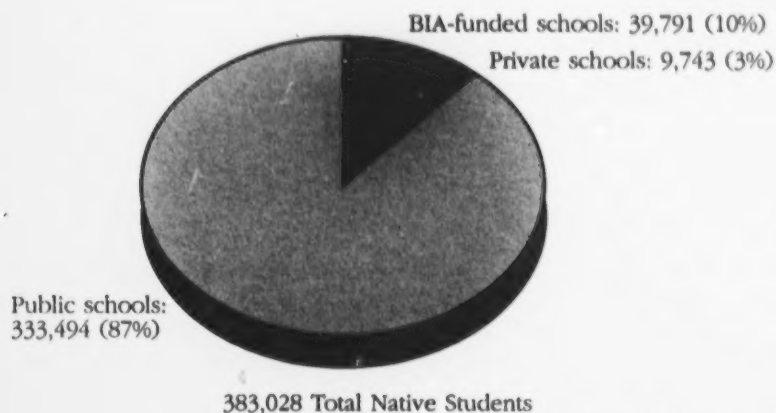


Chart 1. Distribution of Native Elementary and Secondary Enrollment for School Year 1989-90

Source: 17th Annual Report of the National Advisory Council on Indian Education

operated by the BIA. In addition, the federal government provided funding for 24 tribally controlled community colleges.

BIA's education budget during fiscal year 1990 was \$200.43 million. The U.S. Department of Education provided an additional \$55.394 million set-aside for Native education in programs such as bilingual education, education of the handicapped, and vocational and adult education. These amounts do not include appropriations for facilities operation, maintenance, and construction, which was \$104.3 million. As Chart 2 shows, beginning in 1972 and continuing until the late 1980s, BIA's constant-dollar funding for Native education in tribal and federally operated schools generally declined due to the shifting of student enrollment from BIA-operated schools to public schools (primarily in Alaska). During the same period there has been a general increase in constant-dollar funding of the U.S.

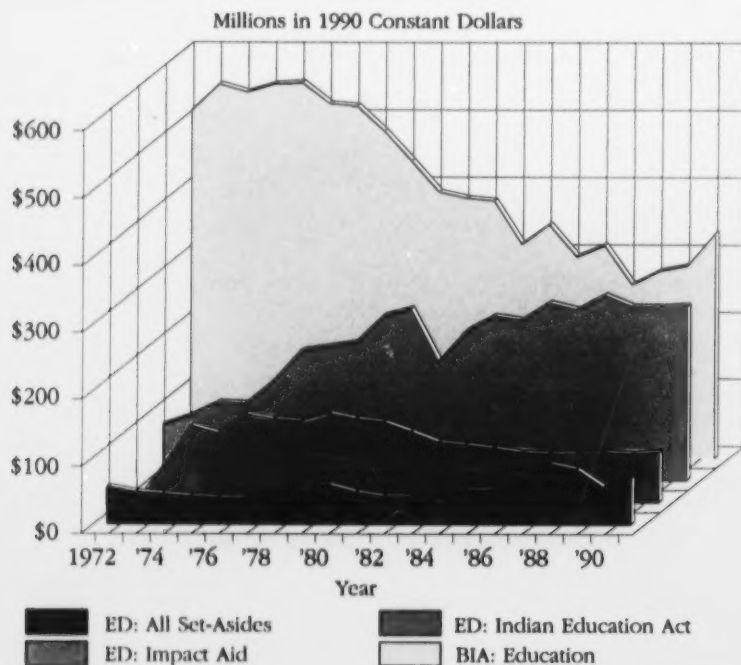


Chart 2. Federal Funding for Native Education by Department of Education and BIA
 Source: U.S. Department of Education

Department of Education's Impact Aid for public schools, a gradual decrease in Indian Education Act funding, and generally stable funding of Indian set-aside programs.

The Changing Context for Native Education

The American Native political and economic structures, educational needs, and mores (such as traditional beliefs and cultural and social practices) are constantly being reshaped. Moreover, there is a great contrast between rural and urban life among the same peoples.

For example, the Inuit in the villages depend on the sea mammal, caribou, water fowl, and other offerings of the land for their daily food and clothing. Also they depend on a mixture of ancient traditional skills and modern technology and equipment, such as rifles and snowmobiles. City-dwelling Inuit and other Natives buy food and clothing from modern shopping malls and live in modern, well-built, comfortably furnished homes purchased with income earned from a job. Such is the real contrast in cultural evolution. There are American Indians and Alaska Natives in every walk of life between these two extremes.

As Native peoples lose the ability to practice traditional subsistence activities and do not develop other skills that will enable them to participate fully in the modern economic environment, their attitudes about life change. When the demand for new work skills is compounded by rapid social, cultural, and political changes, it is easy to understand the significant increase in individual apathy, use of alcohol, suicide, and loss of purpose and pride. Unless greater attention is paid to strengthening the physical, mental, and spiritual health of Natives, these problems will continue to multiply in tribal groups and families.

The nation's leaders, tribal governments, and Native communities are increasingly concerned about the significant increase in social problems among Native peoples and about the loss of their culture and language. Language and culture are inextricably linked, because one supports the other. The ability to speak and learn from their Elders, the music and art forms, the historical and practical knowledge, and the traditional social and cultural practices must not be lost to tribes and the nation as a whole. Schools must enable children and adults to adapt and flourish in the modern environment while maintaining bonds with traditional culture.

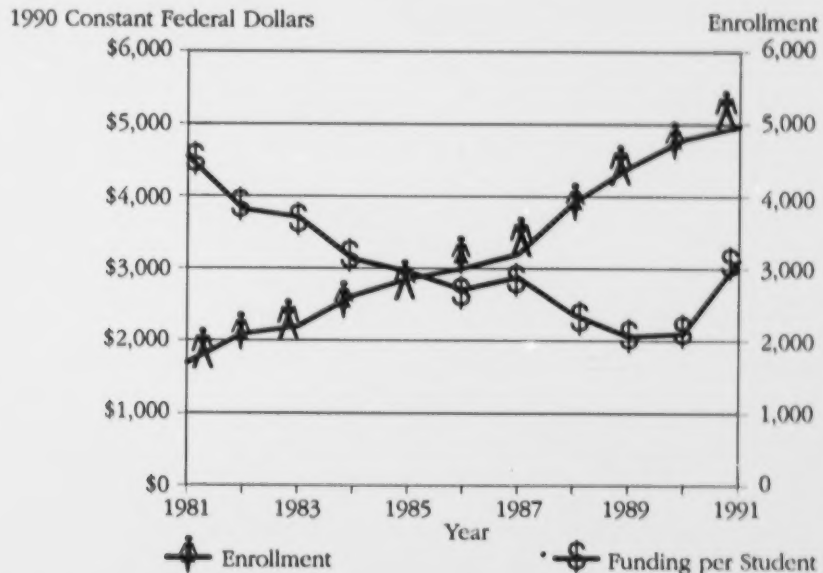


Chart 3. Tribal College Enrollment and Per Student Expenditure

Source: 17th Annual Report of the National Advisory Council on Indian Education

Native students are completing elementary, secondary, and postsecondary school. American Indian and Alaska Native postsecondary enrollment has been increasing gradually, and American College Testing (ACT) scores have shown some improvement. Chart 3 shows that enrollment in tribal colleges has steadily increased since 1981; funding per student, however, steadily declined, in constant dollars between 1981 and 1990, when the decline was halted.

Unfortunately, many primary and secondary schools have not adequately prepared students to take advantage of postsecondary opportunities. Indeed, the scores of Natives on the ACT college entrance exam are lower than for most other minority groups. Tragically, as many as 35 percent, and in some places 50 to 60 percent, of American

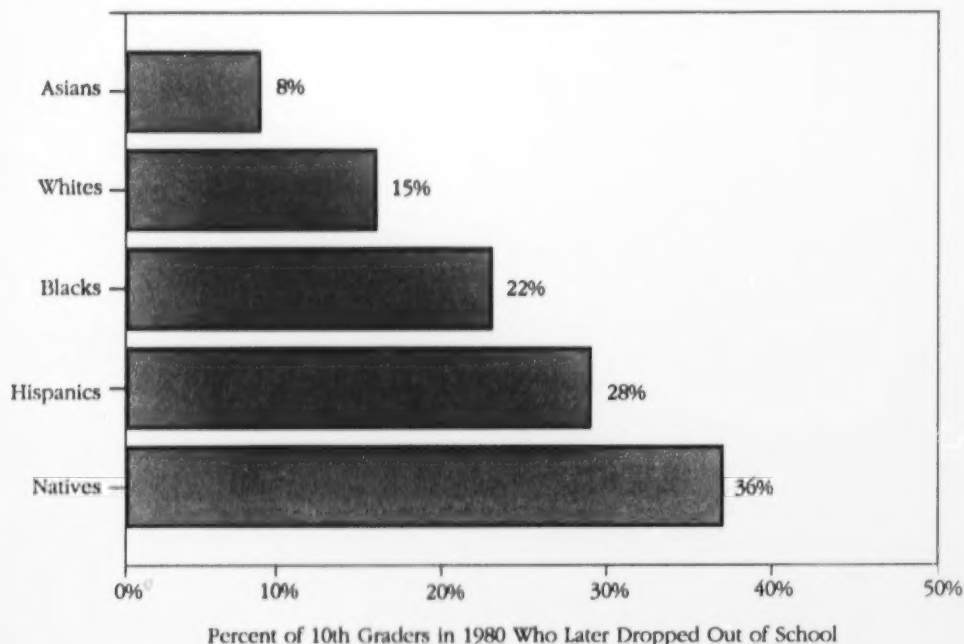


Chart 4. High School Dropout Rates, by Ethnic Group, 1989

Source: National Center for Education Statistics (1989) *Dropout Rates in the United States, High School and Beyond data, Table 9, p. 26.*

Indian and Alaska Native students leave school early. As Chart 4 shows, Native students have the highest high school dropout rate in the nation. Without education they are disempowered and disenfranchised.

Native children must overcome a number of barriers, if schools are to succeed in their mission to educate:

- ❖ Limited opportunities to enrich their language and developmental skills during their preschool years.
- ❖ An unfriendly school climate that fails to promote appropriate academic, social, cultural, and spiritual development among many Native students.

"I am convinced that we (must)...halt Fetal Alcohol Syndrome among our Indian people or we will cease to exist as Indians."

Roberta Ferron,
Rosebud Sioux²

- ❖ Curriculum presented from a purely Western (European) perspective, ignoring all that the historical perspective of American Indians and Alaska Natives has to contribute.
- ❖ Low expectations and relegation to low ability tracks that result in poor academic achievement among up to 60 percent of Native students. As Chart 5 shows, a greater percentage of Native eighth-grade students perform at the *below basic* and *basic* levels in mathematics than white and Asian eighth-grade students. Native students have the smallest percentage performing at the *advanced* level in mathematics of all ethnic groups.
- ❖ A loss of Native language ability and the wisdom of the older generations.
- ❖ Extremely high dropout rates, especially in urban schools, where Natives are in the minority and where the school climate does not support Native students.
- ❖ Teachers with inadequate skills and training to teach Native children effectively.
- ❖ Limited library and learning resources to meet the academic and cultural needs of the community.
- ❖ A lack of Native educators as role models.
- ❖ Economic and social problems in families and communities—poverty, single-parent homes, family violence, suicide, substance abuse, and physical and psychological problems—that act as direct barriers to the education of Native children.
- ❖ A shift away from spiritual values that are critical to the well-being of individuals and society as a whole.
- ❖ A lack of opportunity for parents and communities to develop a real sense of participation.
- ❖ Overt and subtle racism in schools Native children attend, combined with the lack of a multicultural focus in the schools.

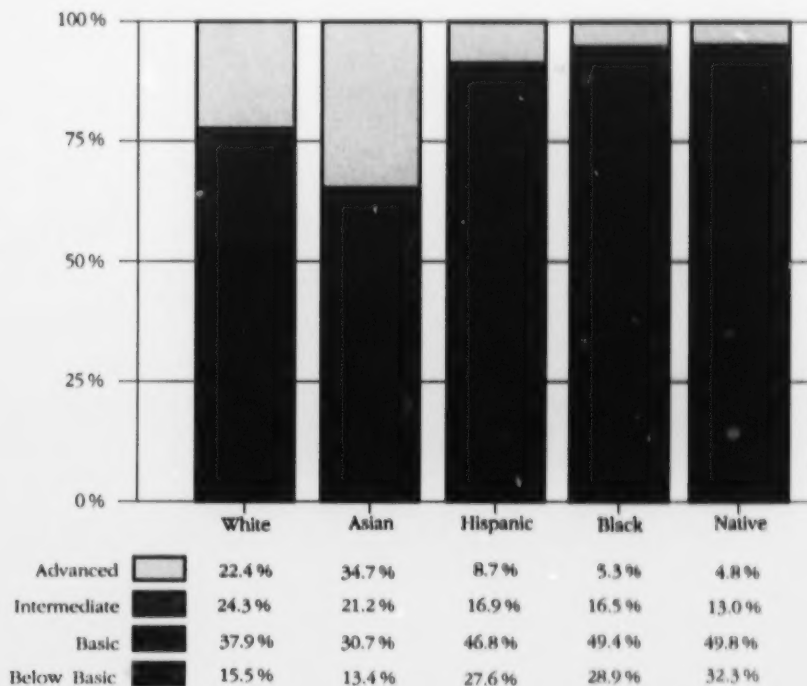


Chart 5. Distribution of Eighth-Grade Students by Level of Performance in Mathematics
 Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center of Education Statistics,
 National Education Longitudinal Study, 1988

- ❖ Limited access to colleges and universities because of insufficient funding.
- ❖ Unequal and unpredictable funding for preschool and many elementary, secondary, postsecondary programs and for tribal colleges. For example, the 75 approved but unfunded public school construction applications, dating back to 1973, amount to a backlog

of \$193.7 million of which two projects per year are funded.

- ❖ Limited use of computers and other technological tools, principles, and research.

Part II: Recent Progress and Proven Practices



Twenty Years of Progress

Despite all these problems some progress has been made in the 20 years since the release of *Indian Education: A National Tragedy—A National Challenge*. Congress created a number of programs to carry out the recommendations of the study, including the Indian Education Act of 1972 (Title IV of P.L. 92-318, as amended).

The development of effective programs during these two decades clearly demonstrates that Natives can succeed in achieving their goals. If provided with adequate funding and other resources, such programs significantly improve the educational opportunities of American Indian and Alaska Native students.

The Task Force reviewed the progress of Native education over the past 20 years. Its findings are as follows:

- ♦ State and local education agencies realize that they have a responsibility to improve academic performance, to reduce dropout rates, and to develop programs that meet the language and cultural needs of Native students.
- ♦ Parent-based early childhood education models have been developed in Native communities and Indian reservations.
- ♦ Parents have become more involved in the planning, development, and implementation of programs that affect Native children.

"We must become the teachers and textbook writers so that cultural integrity will exist...."

Linda Skinner, Choctaw³



- ♦ The numbers of Native teachers, administrators, and university professors in the nation's public schools and universities have increased.
- ♦ Comprehensive programs have been developed to meet the linguistic, cultural, academic, health, and social needs of Native students.
- ♦ Some curriculum materials that present history, music, visual arts, and other fields from a Native perspective have been developed.
- ♦ Students have developed a positive self-concept and attitude about being American Indian and Alaska Native (see Chart 6).
- ♦ The numbers of Native students attending college and pursuing graduate and other professional degrees have increased.
- ♦ Tribally-controlled schools and colleges have been developed.
- ♦ The number of Indian-controlled public schools has increased.

Research and Good Practice

The research related specifically to the education of Alaska Native and American Indian children is very limited, and much of it is poor in quality or focuses on local or regional areas. Despite these limitations, the Task Force decided to review and use the available data and materials. In addition, the Task Force relied on research of the general U.S. student population to explore basic educational issues.

It is evident that the existing educational systems, whether they be public or federal, have not effectively met the educational, cultural, economic, and social needs of Native communities.

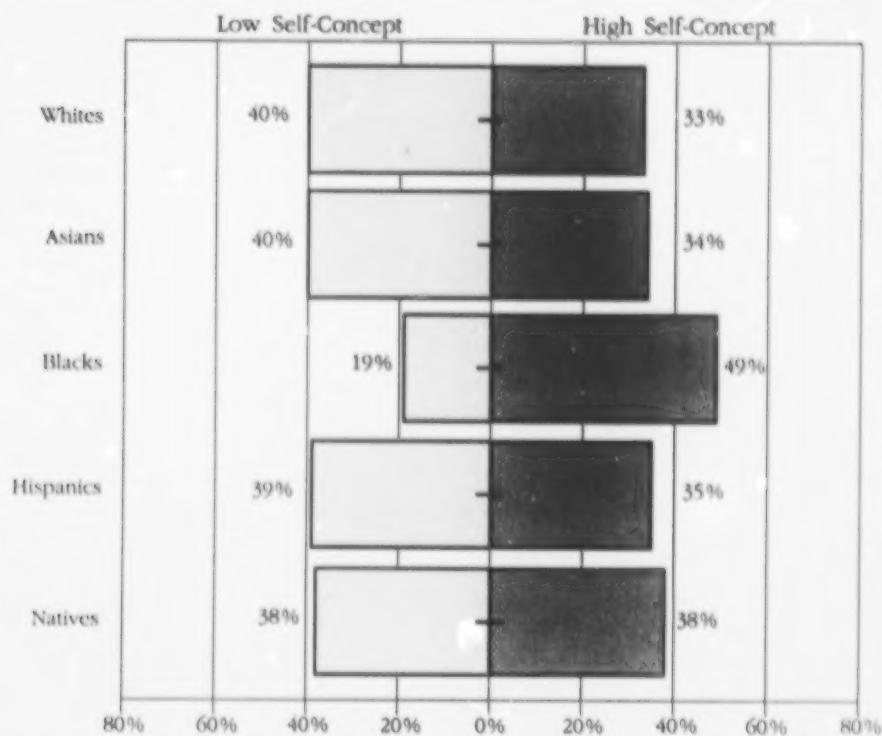


Chart 6. Percentage of Eighth-Graders with Low and High Self-Concepts, by Ethnic Group
 Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center of Education Statistics,
 National Education Longitudinal Study, 1988
 Note: Sample size for Natives is very small.

Current research supports the importance of educational renewal and restructuring models, alternative assessment methodologies, educational leadership, and strategies for the improvement of teaching and learning. These findings must be used by tribal leaders, education policymakers, and educators to strengthen the education systems serving Native children.

A review of the research and good practice revealed the following:

"The children are a gift to us all, to their families, to their Indian nations, to the United States and to the world.... (W)hat is lacking in us that we cannot nurture the richness of these children?"

Leonard Haskie, Navajo⁴

1. Emphasize Early Childhood Education and Training for Parenthood

- ❖ Learning begins with parents and other family members in the home and significantly influences youngsters' academic futures.
- ❖ All parents can significantly influence youngsters' attitudes about schooling and academic performance.
- ❖ Comprehensive services are important to ensuring children's health and to identify learning disabilities early.
- ❖ Smoking, alcohol, and other drugs can cause severe damage to the fetus during pregnancy and can stunt development.
- ❖ Positive experiences by young children are important building blocks for future activity and the development of their attitudes about life.

2. Encourage Language Development

- ❖ Language is the base for intellectual development and for transmitting that knowledge.
- ❖ The language base is strongly influenced, or significantly set, by age three.
- ❖ Students must establish language competence in order to develop their academic and intellectual skills. Learning standard English is essential for school success.
- ❖ The language providing the greatest potential for intellectual development is the language reinforced in both the school and the home.
- ❖ Bilingual or multilingual children have a greater opportunity to develop their analytical and conceptual skills than monolingual children.

- ♦ Use of the language and culture of the community served by schools forms an important base from which children are educated.
- ♦ If a Native language is to be retained for use and continued development, it must be used in the home and reinforced in the schools.

3. Ensure a School Environment Conducive to Learning

- ♦ Having a principal who is an instructional leader is an important characteristic of effective educational programs.
- ♦ The school must be academically challenging with high expectations.
- ♦ The school must be a place where students are comfortable and safe.
- ♦ The physical setting of the school can influence a student's attitude about schooling and educational pursuits.
- ♦ Extracurricular activities are an important part of a youngster's development.

4. Improve the Quality of Teachers and Teaching

- ♦ Individual teachers have an important role in promoting intellectual growth among students.
- ♦ High teacher expectations, well-trained teachers, well-thought-out lesson plans, and well-organized classes all influence a student's ability to succeed in school.
- ♦ Teachers from Native communities in which they serve communicate more effectively, often in subtle ways, with Native students than non-Native teachers new to the communities.

*"I failed the first grade
...for Dick and Jane's
lifestyle was not my
culture. But, I could
understand the dog
Spot as relevant, for I
too had a dog."*

Lawrence Hart, Cheyenne⁵

- ❖ Competent, sensitive, fair teachers are significantly more successful with their students than are teachers who do not display these characteristics.
- ❖ Teachers should recognize that there are a variety of learning styles and adapt their teaching methods to the individual learner. At the same time teachers should build upon and expand the individual student's approaches to learning.
- ❖ The appropriate use of computer-assisted instruction and modern technology enhances the effectiveness of teachers.

5. Provide a Challenging and Culturally Appropriate Curriculum

- ❖ Exposure to a challenging curriculum improves academic performance among students.
- ❖ Schools that adjust their curriculum to accommodate the variety of cultures served are more successful than schools that do not.
- ❖ The perspective from which a school's curriculum is presented can significantly influence Native students' attitudes toward the school, schooling in general, and academic performance.
- ❖ Schools that respect and support a student's language and culture are significantly more successful in educating those students.
- ❖ The historical and practical knowledge base of the community served must be valued and serve as a starting point for schooling.
- ❖ The amount of concentrated time spent on learning English, mathematics, or other core subjects will influence how well those subjects are mastered.

6. *Implement Partnerships Between Schools and Parents, Social Service Agencies, and Business and Industry*

- ◆ When minority groups do not feel comfortable about their economic, social, and political status in relationship to the majority culture, the children of the minority group do not do well in school.
- ◆ The community must believe that the school is theirs and that it must be accountable to meeting all children's needs.
- ◆ High expectations of parents, communities, and students influence students' ability to succeed academically.
- ◆ A collegial relationship with colleges and universities is an important characteristic of successful schools.

"As a community, we have allowed schools to perform at their very minimum, and this must change."

Elaine Salinas, Minnesota Chippewa⁶

7. *Institute Systemic Change and Provide Educational Leadership*

- ◆ Educational improvement must be tied to parental involvement, collegial planning, and cooperation among teachers, the principal, and the community.
- ◆ Successful educational reform includes local empowerment, accountability, and adequate financial and political support.
- ◆ The complex nature of school reform requires partnerships between schools and other agencies such as social services, business and industry, and institutions of higher education.
- ◆ The system must be flexible to allow for innovation and experimentation.

8. *Ensure Accountability*

- ◆ School district officials must be held accountable for the effects of their policies on student performance.



- ❖ Schools with high-performing students are those in which achievement is carefully monitored and results are regularly shared with parents and community members.
- ❖ Curriculum and assessment should be driven by the goals that parents and the community set for the school.
- ❖ Using assessment results to guide curricular and instructional changes improves student achievement.

Part III: Task Force Priorities, a Strategic Framework, and Recommendations



Task Force Priorities

The major issue before the Task Force was deciding how best to improve academic performance of Native students. The Task Force believes that it is critical to start with community-based early childhood education that involves parents and develops their parenting skills. Research indicates that early language acquisition is a key factor in developing the academic skills important to intellectual development, that development must begin early, and that parents have a critical role in that development. Early childhood education programs can provide the setting for significant improvement and prepare the parents for their critical role in their children's development.

The Task Force believes that teachers and school administrators have prime responsibility for improving the quality of education for Native students. The climate of the school, the expectations of teachers, and teachers' skills—all have important implications for student success.

The lack of school teachers and administrators, doctors, university faculty, scientists, librarians, and other professionals from within the American Indian and Alaska Native communities has severely limited the ability of Native communities to practice the independence they once enjoyed in their daily lives and to ensure that independence in their children's lives. The

"Educators, policy-makers, and researchers must improve the climate for children's schooling."

Betty Mangum, Lumbec⁷

Task Force has concluded that if American Indian and Alaska Native communities are to develop the self-sufficiency essential to healthy economies and to their social and cultural well-being, it is important for those communities to build partnerships with colleges and universities to ensure the training of Native educators, professionals, and technicians.

The Task Force learned that there is a direct relationship between students' understanding of their culture and role in society and their ability to function comfortably in society and to achieve academic success. When students' relationships with the larger society are strained, their chances for academic success appear to diminish.

Responsibility for the education of Native students must rest in the hands of the parents and communities served by schools. The Task Force recognizes that some delicate balances among tribal, federal, state, local district, and parental responsibilities must be worked out. The Task Force believes that positive political relationships between tribes and state and federal governments are important to students' self-image and success in school.

Often schools have failed to make clear to students the connection between what they learn in school and what they must know to live comfortably and contribute to society. The Task Force believes problems can be overcome through partnerships between schools and organizations that prepare individuals for careers that promote economic security. Partnership organizations can send specialists to help in the schools, offer places for students to participate in meaningful work, provide training, and promote a work ethic. Partnerships can also demonstrate the relationship between what is learned in school and what knowledge and skills are needed by adults.

Parents, schools, and communities together can show young children that school and learning are important. Partnerships can reinforce the idea that every student is expected to complete school and to develop the skills and knowledge to become self-sufficient and to contribute to the development of independent communities.

One of the most important priorities is to resolve the social problems that limit students' ability to concentrate on learning. Family violence, alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, and the breakdown of family structures all hinder students' performance in school. Health and social agencies must work with families and schools to help students achieve their potential.

Our country has learned an important and expensive lesson during the past decade of school reform: Improvement cannot occur with fragmented reforms. The transformation of our schools must be comprehensive if we are to create a school system that addresses all aspects of children's learning and development, from birth. If change is implemented piecemeal, we end up with pockets of excellence that serve the few and a flawed education system that does not work for the many. The Task Force believes the federal government must continue and even expand support for American Indian and Alaska Native nations if the transformation is to be comprehensive and systemic.

American Natives can benefit from another lesson about school restructuring that our country as a whole learned the hard way. The key elements needed for school restructuring include a communitywide commitment to change (more positive attitudes among parents and students), performance-based goals, incentives and accountability for performance (such as a greater role for teachers in decision making), better ways of assessing results, and resources that match the needs of the school system. The system must respect and value

the cultures of the community served and the contributions of the people.

With these lessons in mind, the Task Force urges every partner who plays a role in educating Native children to follow through with the recommendations in this report. The Indian nations at risk deserve nothing less.

"A long-time dream is that...public school systems will... Incorporate Indian... activities, information, curriculum and personnel into the regular school system."

Gwen Shunatona, Potawatomi⁸

A Strategic Framework for Improving Schools

The Task Force recommends five major strategies for implementing its recommendations:

1. **Develop comprehensive education plans** that bring together federal, state, local, and tribal resources to achieve the Native education goals. These plans should draw on the most promising research and effective practices identified over the past 20 years.
2. **Develop partnerships** among schools and parents, tribes, universities, business and industry, and health and social service agencies. These partners must play an active role in developing local program plans.
3. **Emphasize four national priorities** that will significantly improve academic performance and promote self-sufficiency among American Indians and Alaska Natives.
 - ❖ Developing parent-based, early childhood education programs that are culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate.
 - ❖ Establishing the promotion of students' tribal language and culture as a responsibility of the school.
 - ❖ Training of Native teachers to increase the numbers of Indian educators and other professionals and to improve the quality of instruction.

- ♦ Strengthening tribal and Bureau of Indian Affairs colleges as a means to enhance communities and prepare students for higher levels of success when they move on to four-year colleges and universities.
- 4. **Create mechanisms** that will hold local, tribal, state, and national officials accountable for achieving the goals.
- 5. **Foster understanding of the relationships** between tribes and all levels of government.

Recommendations for Partners

Within the strategic framework, the Task Force makes the following recommendations for specific partners responsible for the education of Native children and adults:

Recommendations for Parents of Native Children

- ♦ Take responsibility for being your children's first and most important teacher, especially in the development of their language base.
- ♦ Become active in school and other activities to ensure that the school meets your expectations and to show support for schooling as important to your children's development.
- ♦ Work with your local, tribal, state, and national political representatives to ensure that proper attention is paid to improving schools and schooling.
- ♦ Develop your parental skills and continue learning throughout life.
- ♦ Hold schools accountable for educational outcomes.

Recommendations for School Officials and Educators

- ❖ Promote and maintain high expectations for all students. Teach them the skills they need to prepare for vocational, technical, business, or other professional careers.
- ❖ Make the curriculum academically challenging. Integrate the contemporary, historical, and cultural perspectives of American Natives. Give education a multicultural focus to eliminate racism and promote understanding among all races.
- ❖ Establish and enforce a code of conduct for students, teachers, and administrators.
- ❖ Make the school a comfortable and safe place. Keep it free of alcohol and drugs.
- ❖ Develop, recruit, and retain top-quality teachers and administrators. Encourage and reward them. Seek out educators from the Native community who can serve as role models.
- ❖ Monitor the progress of students, use appropriate evaluation and assessment information to improve instruction, and share the results with parents.
- ❖ Welcome parents, tribal leaders, and other members of the community as partners. Show them how to become involved in their children's education.
- ❖ Help students explore the connection between what they learn in school and what they need to know to experience productive and satisfying lives. Encourage students in efforts to find jobs, seek advanced training, or go on to a university.
- ❖ Work with the providers of health and social services to help reduce the difficulties facing many Native children.

- ❖ Form partnerships with local colleges, business and industry, and other community organizations to expand the human and financial resources of schools.

Recommendations for Tribal Governments and Native Communities

- ❖ Promote tribal/community responsibility and accountability for the education of all students.
- ❖ Pursue the intellectual, cultural, social, spiritual, and physical development of all children and adults as tribal priorities.
- ❖ Establish tribal/community education plans that define the purposes of education and outline the goals and strategies necessary to carry out those purposes.
- ❖ Provide financial and other kinds of support necessary to ensure development of the academic skills and training of professionals necessary to develop self-sufficient communities.
- ❖ Support students seeking education in the vocational/technical fields.
- ❖ Appoint tribal leaders to work directly with local and state agencies to promote the tribe's education goals and to ensure the representation of these goals in local education plans and initiatives.
- ❖ Recognize the need to develop job opportunities locally that will encourage students to continue their education.
- ❖ Develop partnerships with government, philanthropic organizations, and business and industry to create educational endowments (with tax adjustments) to help meet the costs of operating tribal schools and colleges.

"Schools that fail to acknowledge diversity ... hurt all children by creating a lack of understanding in the population at large."

Ron Houston, Pima⁹

Recommendations for Local Governments and Schools

- ♦ Remove social and political barriers that prevent Natives from being elected to school boards in their communities.
- ♦ Ensure that school budgets address the multicultural educational needs of the citizens served by the local schools.
- ♦ Provide opportunities for parents from the multicultural communities to develop partnerships with schools serving their communities.
- ♦ Give the principals direct authority and responsibility for building partnerships and improving schools.
- ♦ Insist on the use of textbooks and other library and learning resources that provide contemporary and historical information on American Natives from a variety of perspectives.

Recommendations for State Governments

- ♦ Develop comprehensive educational plans with local districts and tribal governments to meet the educational needs and to improve the academic achievement of Native students.
- ♦ Require state departments of education to allocate funding and technical assistance to local schools to incorporate early childhood education principles in the primary grades, to develop curricula that are culturally and linguistically appropriate for all grades, and to provide in-service training for teachers of Natives.
- ♦ Allocate specific funding for schools serving Native children to develop and use linguistically, culturally, and developmentally appropriate curricula.

- ◆ Enact legislation that implements Title I of P.L. 101-477, the Native American Languages Act of October 30, 1990, in public schools.
- ◆ Develop legislation, in partnership with universities and tribes, that allows tribal language, culture, and vocational experts to attain certification as classroom teachers once their competence as teachers has been documented.
- ◆ Require state departments of education to report annually on the progress their schools are making toward improving academic performance and meeting the national American Indian and Alaska Native Education Goals.
- ◆ Provide alternative education options such as model schools, magnet schools, and other schools designed to meet the unique language and culturally related educational needs of Native students.

Recommendations for the Federal Government

Systemic Education Reforms:

- ◆ Declare the improvement of schools that Native children attend and the improvement of the academic performance of Native children to be the nation's highest priority for services to American Indians and Alaska Natives.
- ◆ In cooperation with Secretaries from other departments, undertake annual reviews of all federal appropriations for the education of Native children and adults, and coordinate the establishment of priorities for Native education programs across the federal government.
- ◆ Seek authorization to limit federal regulatory requirements for schools and universities that develop

"...[C]ontributions made to improve the quality of life for Indian people...make a positive contribution to all people."

Enoch Kelly Haney, Seminole/Creek ¹⁰



comprehensive plans, approved by the Secretary, to improve the quality of education for Native students.

- ◆ Encourage colleges, universities, and state and local education agencies to develop comprehensive plans that incorporate the Indian Student Bill of Rights and the national American Indian and Alaska Native Education Goals.
- ◆ Promote legislation that will require public and Bureau of Indian Affairs schools to include the participation of tribes, Native communities, and parents of Native children in the development, implementation, and evaluation of local, state, and federal plans.
- ◆ Require tribal approval of local and state plans as a condition of approval by the U.S. Department of Education for limiting rules, regulations, and requirements of federal education programs serving Native children and adults.
- ◆ Seek legislation to establish an Assistant Secretary for Indian Education in the U.S. Department of Education to provide national direction and coordination for all Department of Education programs serving Native students.
- ◆ Seek legislation to amend the Bilingual Education Act to allow for the retention and continued development of Native languages in accordance with Title I of P.L. 101-477, the Native American Language Act of October 30, 1990.

Priorities for Additional Funding:

- ◆ Provide additional funding to support early childhood education, prenatal care, and parental training programs that are linguistically, culturally, and developmentally appropriate for Native children in every American Indian and Alaska Native community.
- ◆ Seek legislation to require federal programs providing social services to Natives to develop partnerships

with tribal groups and schools serving Native children. These partnerships should give the highest priority to prenatal care, parental training, and early childhood education, as well as health care for expectant mothers and young children.

- ♦ Seek legislation to authorize the establishment of a national research and school improvement center for Native education. The center would serve as a resource for schools educating Native children, tribes, state departments of education, and universities and as a source of funding for research designed to improve education programs and academic achievement of Native students.
- ♦ Seek legislation to amend the Indian Education Act of 1972, as amended, (Title V, P.L. 100-297) to provide long-term discretionary funding for model projects and outreach activities for Native parents and students designed to improve schools and academic performance.
- ♦ Seek legislation to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, by—
 - Requesting authorization to establish a set-aside for Natives in the Special Programs for Disadvantaged Students (Title IV of the Higher Education Act) programs to ensure increased access to and completion of higher education.
 - Requesting authorization for an Indian College set-aside in Title III of the Act.

*Priorities for Research, Statistics,
and Evaluation:*

- ♦ Create a national information center to collect and distribute information on educational technology and programs that use technology for improving schools and learning.

"...[The] lack of a national database on American Indian education...frustrates research efforts...."

Bobby Wright,
Chippewa-Cree ¹¹



- ◆ Provide for a system of independent evaluation and dissemination of programs and projects shown to be effective for Native children.
- ◆ Assess the extent of adult illiteracy in Native communities, review the adequacy of current funding and programs, and develop plans to eliminate illiteracy in the Native communities.
- ◆ Assess the unmet higher education financial and academic needs of Native students and coordinate the development of specific plans, programs, and budgets to increase the number of Native students attending and graduating from our nation's colleges and universities.
- ◆ Seek an increase in funding to train Native educators for elementary, secondary, and university teaching and other professions in science, mathematics, law, engineering, medicine, business, the social sciences, and related fields as a national priority.
- ◆ Request the Department of Interior to implement fully P.L. 95-561, Title XI of the Education Amendments Act of 1978, expanding Indian self-determination in BIA schools.
- ◆ Seek legislation to ensure equity in funding for school facilities and school operations to improve the effectiveness of BIA and Impact Aid schools serving Native students.
- ◆ Seek equity in funding for facilities and the operation of tribal and federal colleges at levels that match the average national per-pupil expenditures in public community colleges.

Recommendations for Colleges and Universities

- ◆ Institutionalize funding for Native students, faculty, and programs that strengthen the technical and professional capabilities of Native communities.

- ❖ Revise teacher training programs to prepare educators to work within a multicultural setting that supports and challenges students from diverse cultures.
- ❖ Develop, recruit, hire, and retain American Indian and Alaska Native faculty.
- ❖ Encourage scholarly work on curricula and textbook development that incorporates Native perspectives.
- ❖ Develop partnerships with school districts to improve local education.
- ❖ Develop partnerships with Native communities to provide technical assistance, train professionals, and address research questions important to those communities.

Conclusion

American Indians and Alaska Natives, with languages and cultures found in no other place in the world, are in danger of losing their distinctive identities. Many members of the younger generation know little or nothing about their Native languages, cultures, rich histories, fine arts, and other unique features of their cultural identities. The knowledgeable Elders, once important teachers in transmitting the historical, cultural, and practical knowledge to the young, are no longer a part of the educational systems. In addition, the intellectual leaders—the historians, the spiritualists, the medical experts, the philosophers—are no longer trained through a formal tribal process of education during the youngsters' upbringing.

If Native cultures remain important today, as many Native political and educational leaders believe they do, they must again become a part of the educational process. Tribal groups must develop educational structures built on their cultural priorities and foster continued

"As the world moves toward the 21st century, the artistic and cultural vision of Native Americans can help us appreciate the dual task of preserving historic values while building new traditions."

Rennard Strickland, Osage/Cherokee ¹²



development and growth. Schools must do their part in supporting this movement.

Partnerships between schools and Native communities and tribes must become one of the schools' highest priorities. Schools must encourage positive political relationships, recognize the value of a people's language and culture, and support broad community participation in the schools.

The American Indian and Alaska Native children of this nation must not be overlooked as the United States begins building a stronger educational system. Native students have a legitimate right to participate in this effort and can expect no less as indigenous peoples and citizens of this great nation. The motivation, spiritual well-being, physical health, and intellectual development of the American Indian and Alaska Native students require it. Their leaders are demanding it, and their survival as a people depends upon it.

The recommendations in this report reaffirm the value of Native languages and cultures. They call for an educational system that will equip all tribal members with the skills and knowledge necessary to participate fully in today's society. They set the stage for Natives to build strong self-sufficient communities.

The responsibility for improvement is shared by all those involved in the education of Native students—public, tribal, and federal school personnel and government officials; parents and students; and community members. The Task Force calls for all involved to take the necessary action to implement the recommendations of this report.

American Indians and Alaska Natives have demonstrated that they are a resourceful and resilient people. Despite many challenges they have faced over the past 500 years of contact with European, Asian,

African, and other Old World nations, they have survived as distinct peoples. This nation owes a great debt for all that Natives have contributed to help it become the great nation it is today. Natives must and will continue their participation in the national effort to strengthen America economically and culturally.

The most important responsibility of any society is to ensure the health, protection, and education of its young children. The Indian Nations At Risk Task Force believes that the American people will ensure that all children in the United States have equal opportunity to receive these benefits, including all American Indian and Alaska Native children.

Notes

¹Rosemary Christensen, Ojibwe, parent, teacher, and curriculum specialist, Indian Education Director, Minneapolis Public Schools, Minneapolis, MN. Testimony before the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force, Great Lakes Region, St. Paul, MN, September 21, 1990.

²Roberta Ferron, Rosebud Sioux, parent, teacher, counselor, and attorney, Associate Director, Equal Employment/Affirmative Action, University of Washington. Testimony before the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force, Northwest Region, Seattle, WA, September 5, 1990.

³Linda Skinner, Choctaw, parent, teacher, curriculum specialist, Director of Indian Education, Oklahoma State Department of Education, Oklahoma City, OK. Testimony before the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force, Plains Region, Oklahoma City, OK, September 18, 1990.

⁴Leonard Haskie, Navajo, parent, past Interim Tribal Chairman-President of the Navajo Nation, Window Rock, AZ. Testimony before the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force, Southwest Region, Phoenix, AZ, September 12, 1990.

⁵Lawrence Hart, Cheyenne, parent and Peace Chief, Director, Cheyenne Cultural Center, Clinton, OK. Testimony before the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force, Plains Region, Oklahoma City, OK, September 17, 1990.

⁶Elaine Salinas, Minnesota Chippewa, former teacher-administrator of K-12 and adult programs, Education Program Officer, Urban Coalition, Minneapolis, MN. Testimony before the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force, Great Lakes Region, St. Paul, MN, September 21, 1990.

⁷Betty Mangum, Lumbee, parent and teacher, Director of Indian Education, North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction, Raleigh, NC. Testimony before the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force, Eastern Region, Cherokee, NC, October 2, 1990.

- ⁸Gwen Shunatona, Potawatomi, teacher and counselor, President, ORBIS Associates, Washington, DC. Testimony before the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force, Eastern Region, Cherokee, NC, October 2, 1990.
- ⁹Ron Houston, Pima, teacher, Human Rights Specialist, National Education Association, Washington, DC. Testimony before the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force, First Meeting of the Task Force, Washington, DC, May 14, 1990.
- ¹⁰Enoch Kelly Haney, Seminole/Creek, parent and artist, Senator in the Oklahoma State Legislature, Seminole, OK. Testimony before the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force, Plains Region, Oklahoma City, OK, September 17, 1990.
- ¹¹Bobby Wright, Chippewa-Cree, scholar, Assistant Professor/Research Associate, Pennsylvania State University. Testimony before the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force, High Plains Region, Billings, MT, August 20, 1990.
- ¹²Rennard Strickland, Osage/Cherokee, scholar, Director, American Indian Law & Policy Center, The University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK. Testimony before the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force, Plains Region, Oklahoma City, OK, September 17, 1990.

Commissioned Papers of the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force

Indian Nations At Risk Task Force: Listening to the People:
G. Mike Charleston and Gaye Leia King

Current Conditions in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities: Margaret Connell Szasz

Native American Education at a Turning Point: Current Demographics and Trends: Walter Hillabrant, Mike Romano, and David Stang

Responsibilities and Roles of Governments and Native People in the Education of American Indians and Alaska Natives: Kirke Kickingbird and Mike Charleston

Funding and Resources for American Indian and Alaska Native Education: William Brescia

Native and Non-Native Teachers and Administrators for Elementary and Secondary Schools Serving Native Students: Grayson Noley

Continuous Evaluation of Native Education Programs for American Indian and Alaska Native Students: Richard Nichols

Early Childhood Education in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities: Alice Paul

Dropout Prevention and Special School Support Services for American Indian and Alaska Native Students: Jon Reyhner

Improving Parental Involvement in Elementary and Secondary Education for American Indian and Alaska Native Students: Robbin Butterfield and Floy Pepper

Teaching Through Traditions: Incorporating Native Languages and Cultures into Curricula: Linda Skinner

Strategic Plans for Use of Modern Technology in the Education of American Indian and Alaska Native Students: Paul Berg and Jason Ohler

Reading and Language Arts Curricula in Elementary and Secondary Education for American Indians and Alaska Natives: Gerald Brown

Mathematics and Science Curricula in Elementary and Secondary Education for American Indian and Alaska Native Students: Vera Preston

History and Social Studies Curricula in Elementary and Secondary Schools: Karen Harvey

Gifted and Talented American Indian and Alaska Native Students: Stuart Tonemah

American Indian and Alaska Natives with Disabilities: Marilyn Johnson

American Indian and Alaska Native Higher Education: Toward a New Century of Academic Achievement and Cultural Integrity: Bobby Wright

Tribal Colleges: Underfunded Miracles: Schuyler Houser

Adult Literacy, Adult Education, and Vocational-Technical Education for American Indians and Alaska Natives: John Hatch

A Concluding Prospectus on Change and Development for Native Education: David Beaulieu

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Appendix— Practices In Native Education

In testimony to the Task Force, parents, educators, and tribal leaders described a number of successful practices in Native education. This section includes concise descriptions of a sampling of these practices going on throughout the United States.

The Denver Indian Center— Circle of Learning Pre-K Curriculum

The Circle of Learning, sponsored by the Denver Indian Center, provides preschool classes, home-based instruction, and parent education services to families in the Denver, Colorado, area. The Center, established in 1983, serves American Indians from 87 different tribes, mostly from the Southwest and the Northern and Southern Plains regions. The purpose of the Indian Center is to provide people with educational, vocational, and social services. The Center also works to reduce isolation by educating the recipients not only about their own tribe but about other tribes in the region as well.

The Circle of Learning offers an American Indian culturally based model for early childhood education. Each activity is related to a tribal legend from a particular region. One legend tells about a girl who goes ice fishing alone for the first time and the obstacles she encounters. Activities that follow this story include science lessons on sea life in fresh and salt water, and art activities asking children to paint watercolor pictures of the images they formed in their minds while listening to the story.

Home visits focus primarily on learning activities for the children and the

use of toys as instructional materials. Parents receive instruction in areas such as nutrition, safety, child growth, and positive parenting skills. The Circle of Learning offers support groups and classes in cooking and sewing, family literacy, and parenting skills.

Findings indicate that those children who have participated in the Circle of Learning perform in kindergarten at levels comparable to their classmates, and by first grade 90 percent of these students have risen to the top of their class. Some students have even skipped from first grade to third grade. Success is attributed to the program's focus on cultural instruction that fosters positive self-esteem.

The Circle of Learning prekindergarten curriculum has won two awards from the National Indian Education Association and is currently being replicated at the American Indian Center in Baltimore, Maryland, and at the United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck, North Dakota. The Denver Indian Center has alliances with 14 countries outside the United States and continues to pursue innovative educational approaches.



Tribal Community Colleges

Since 1968 tribal community colleges have played a vital role for Native American individuals and communities. Tribal colleges offer adult basic education programs, tutoring programs, financial aid, career counseling, and vocational rehabilitation. The colleges focus on cultural traditions, offer American Indian studies and Native language programs, and tailor academic methods for their students. Furthermore, tribal colleges function as centers for research, collecting historical records and examining economic development issues. Each of the 24 tribal colleges has a unique focus, reflecting its dedication to serve its community.

Sinte Gleska College, Rosebud, South Dakota: Sinte Gleska has an extensive training program to prepare teachers for working with Indian children. Courses include Lakota language training and deal with local learning styles and cultural and reservation factors that affect learning. Sinte Gleska is the only tribal community college to offer a master's degree in education, as well as the bachelor's degree. The graduate program focuses on teaching and learning theory.

Success of the program is evident from the fact that many local Lakota teachers are now in the school systems on the reservation and that non-Indian

teachers trained at the college have been highly sensitized to the local culture.

Salish Kootenai College, Pablo, Montana: Responding to the vocational needs of the community as they emerge over time, Salish Kootenai has developed programs in forestry, building trades, human services technology, early childhood education, secretarial training, computer training, nursing, and dental assistance. Salish Kootenai also has established a work experience program that involves classroom instruction three days a week, free of charge, meshed with work two days a week in a tribal agency.

Little Big Horn College, Crow Agency, Montana: Little Big Horn College, exerting a strong force for equity and quality, has filed successful lawsuits to challenge local discrimination. In 1981 college leaders worked to increase the number of Indians registered to vote. Subsequently, they successfully challenged the state's district boundaries, contending that the reservation had been divided in order to keep Indians from having a majority in any region. In 1986 college leaders succeeded in challenging county hiring practices, pointing out that only 4 out of 200 county employees were Indian and only 1 of 99 county board members was from the Crow tribe.



Service Integration to Promote Indian Student Health

A number of Indian schools across the country are working with local Indian Health Services (IHS) to provide in-school programs promoting student health.

Crazy Horse School, Aberdeen, South Dakota: Located on the Pine Ridge Reservation, this BIA grant school serves 320 students in grades K-12. Most students live on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Four years ago the school received funding from the Native American School Health Project (IHS federal grant) and selected a curriculum model from Edina, Minnesota, titled *Growing Healthy*. This program trains regular classroom teachers to use a curriculum and interactive instructional kits focusing on good health and disease prevention. In addition, local IHS staff provide a number of health services within the school, including TB testing, immunizations, dental services, and presentations on drug and alcohol abuse. Crazy Horse staff are currently adapting the materials to be more Indian-specific, and the program is being replicated by all the other schools on Pine Ridge.

St. Peter's Mission School, Sacaton, Arizona: The Pima Indians of Gila River Indian Community have the highest incidence of diabetes in the

United States. Of the 1,265 students in grades K-8 in the seven reservation schools, more than 45 percent are classified as moderately to severely obese. Obesity in youth is highly correlated with early onset of diabetes. St. Peter's Mission School, which is operated by the local Catholic Diocese, was chosen six years ago to pilot this IHS pilot project. The Fitness and Nutrition Project includes a comprehensive fitness and nutrition education curriculum for grades 3 and 4, pre- and postfitness testing, and a schoolwide walking and jogging program combined with modification of the school lunch program to reduce dietary fat and sugar.

In the third year of the program, fitness tests began to show greater proportions of St. Peter's students in the normal range compared with students at a nearby parochial school. Seventy-five percent have improved their scores each year for the past three years, and this year 27 students are being tested for the President's Council on Fitness Awards (compared with three students at the comparison school).

Health and Human Services Secretary Louis Sullivan has recognized the program as outstanding.

Educational Leadership Programs

Educational leadership programs in prestigious universities prepare teachers, administrators, policymakers, researchers, and other professionals to improve education for Native students.

American Indian Leadership Program, The Pennsylvania State University: The central aim of the American Indian Leadership Program (AILP) is to train qualified leaders for service to Indian nations. By summer 1990, 32 participants had earned doctoral degrees and 113 had earned master's degrees. Ninety-five percent of the program's graduates contribute to American Indian education as college presidents, professors, administrators, and teachers.

AILP students meet in a weekly seminar to discuss how their university experiences relate to their activities in Indian education. Native graduate students can participate in research projects under the supervision of faculty members and through the American Indian Education Policy Center. AILP students can attend meetings of national organizations such as the National Indian Education Association and the American Educational Research Association.

AILP provides a monthly living stipend. Penn State Graduate School

provides a grant-in-aid that covers tuition. Financial aid awards are made by the Minority Scholars Program, the graduate school, and the degree-granting colleges and departments. Special federal financial aid programs, such as Title V Indian Education Act, Title VII Bilingual Education, and Indian Health Service fellowships, also are available.

Harvard Native American Program, Harvard Graduate School of Education: The Harvard Native American Program prepares American Indians to fill leadership positions in all areas of education by (1) providing support services, counseling, and financial aid; (2) recruiting students to the Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE); (3) offering course work; (4) conducting research; (5) sponsoring forums on Native American education; (6) serving as an information resource on Native American issues, especially education, to the Harvard University community and the greater Boston area; and (7) publishing bibliographies and other materials. Currently, 156 alumni work in all areas of Indian education including teaching; research; curriculum development; school administration; policy studies; and tribal, state, and federal administration.

State Boarding School with Special Focus on Entrepreneurship of the Pacific Rim

Mt. Edgecumbe High School (MEHS) in Sitka, Alaska, is a state-supported four-year boarding school serving 200 students from 139 Alaskan communities. MEHS originated as a BIA school in 1947 and was closed as such in 1983. In 1985, Alaska reopened Mt. Edgecumbe as a Pacific Rim magnet school open to all state residents. The coed student body represents 14 different ethnic groups including 42 percent Inuit, 24 percent Aleut, 2 percent African-American, and 12 percent white. At-risk students make up about 40 percent of the MEHS population.

The Continuous Improvement Process (CIP) is the basis for MEHS's management. CIP implies total quality, working "smarter" rather than harder, and aiming to improve at all times. MEHS also focuses heavily on human relations, promoting cooperation rather than conflict and the importance of empowering, enabling, and entrusting people.

MEHS integrates Pacific Rim studies into core academic courses. The business application component of the program teaches students how to conduct business with the Pacific Rim. Edgecumbe Enterprises is a student-run business that exports smoked sal-

mon as an adjunct to MEHS's business program. In 1989, 10 MEHS students met with marketing and sales experts in Japan to learn how Japan's retail system works. Students have begun distributing other products locally as well.

MEHS has instituted an extended-family concept whereby staff assume a "parent" role for a small group of students. Families meet weekly for dinners and provide mutual support. A crisis prevention program that uses community resources and peer support also supports students in serious need.

- ♦ Approximately half of entering MEHS students have academic test scores averaging below the 20th percentile. The average attendance at MEHS is two years, and over this period scores generally increase to the 50th percentile.
- ♦ Seventy-nine percent of MEHS students who graduate go on to postsecondary education or training.
- ♦ Forty-seven percent of 1985-89 MEHS graduates currently attend postsecondary institutions, where they maintain a college grade point average of 2.9.



State Initiatives to Support Native Education

Minnesota represents a model of cooperation among tribes, state government, and the federal government in providing education for Natives. The state's program currently supports American Indian Postsecondary Scholarship Assistance and school-based programs. Programs include the following:

Minnesota Indian Scholarship Program (1955): This program awards financial aid to Indian students for tuition, room and board, and related costs on the basis of need. Scholarships may be used for education in colleges or in business, technical, or vocational schools. This program is funded at \$1,582,000 and supports close to 1,500 Indian students annually. More than 6,000 Indian students assisted by the program have completed their postsecondary education—70 percent within the past 10 years. The state currently contributes 60 percent of the funding, and tribal government programs, 40 percent.

Minnesota Postsecondary Preparation Program (1985): On the advice of the Minnesota Indian Scholarship Committee, the state may make grants to school districts to support postsecondary preparation for secondary pupils who are of at least one-fourth Indian ancestry. This grant

initiative has been funded at \$857,000 for each of the past two years.

Minnesota American Indian Education Act (1988): This Act contains provisions that authorize school districts with at least 10 Indian children to recruit and retain teachers who are Indian. Licenses for instructors of Native language, history, and culture will now be issued for the same duration as other teaching licenses. Indian Parent Committees in school districts with 10 or more Indian children enrolled advise the district on all programs for elementary and secondary grades, special education programs, and support services in addition to Indian language and culture programs. Finally, the Minnesota State Board of Education can now create Indian Education Committees to advise the state.

Tribal School Equalization Act: This historic 1989 piece of state Indian legislation enables the state and the federal government to cooperate in funding schools operated by tribal governments and the state of Minnesota. It provides a formula for determining state aid that "equalizes" federal basic support so that the per pupil expenditures for Indian children at tribal schools are equal to those available in state public school districts.

Parental Participation in Native Education

From public hearings held by the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force, parental participation emerged as one of the most important strategies available for improving education for American Indian and Alaska Native students. Successful programs welcome parents as partners, encouraging them to become involved in school in a variety of important ways.

At Wounded Knee Elementary School in Manderson, South Dakota, parents have been included as a key part of all programs and activities. Many parents volunteer to support events such as the K-4 Fun Night. Pizza party incentives are offered to classes that attract 95 percent or better attendance by parents on parent-teacher conference nights. Free dinner is provided for parents who attend. These strategies have resulted in almost 100 percent parental attendance at school events. In addition, a full-time home-school coordinator monitors attendance and visits the homes of all absent students each day they are not in school. Over the past three years, student attendance rates have risen from 89 to 95 percent.

The **Oregon Indian Education Association** (OIEA), through a grant from the National Science Foundation, in 1986 began offering *Family Math* throughout Native communities in Oregon. This program gives parents and children opportunities to participate together in activities that reinforce and supplement the school mathematics curriculum. The Grand Ronde tribal community has been offering *Family Math* for more than three years. The program boasts at least 32 parents a session, once a month. The tribe itself sponsors the activities and contributes a meal to this popular community event.

Parental involvement at **Heart of the Earth Survival School** in Minneapolis, Minnesota, has doubled since the staff designated a parental involvement coordinator. The school now requires parents to attend at least one of the special events, which include traditional feasts and presentations by the drum and dance club. Parents of students who are to be recognized at an event are offered transportation to and from the school. The school also offers counseling and traditional Native ceremonial sweatlodges to families in the community.



A Culture-Based Language and Technology Program

Peach Springs School in Peach Springs, Arizona, serves 225 students in grades K-8, the fourth generation of tribal members to attend the school. More than 75 percent of total school staff are Hualapai. Ninety-one percent of students hear the Hualapai language (an oral language) spoken at home. A little over half the students speak the language fluently, and 75 percent of the students have been identified as having limited English proficiency (LEP).

Hualapai children at the school are involved in **Project Tradition and Technology (Project TNT): The Hualapai Bilingual Academic Excellence Program**, which has curriculum, literacy, and technology models. The project aims to help students (1) become fluent and literate in the English and Hualapai languages; (2) develop self-confidence, both in their own culture and in the Anglo culture; and (3) develop thinking, decision making, and problem-solving skills, using the Hualapai culture.

The **Curriculum Model** is a holistic method that uses environmental themes to integrate educational subjects, language, culture, and life experiences of Hualapai children. All classroom lessons use both English and Hualapai. For example, the goal of the lesson might be to learn the importance of cattle to the Hualapai by viewing films, taking field trips, creating a

mural, and inviting a cowboy to speak to classes.

The **Literacy Model** focuses on oral fluency and literacy in both English and the Hualapai language. Instruction is given by a teacher and a bilingual teacher's aide. This practice reduces the teacher-student ratio, and the groups receive alternate instruction in English and Hualapai. Using the two languages interchangeably is encouraged. This model uses a whole language approach that includes reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities. As a result, students maintain and perpetuate their strong oral tradition and become effective users of their own language as well as English.

The **Interactive Technology Model** provides students with a variety of computer and audiovisual tools to increase their communication abilities. Students learn video production (e.g., taping a traditional story being told by an Elder) and use the computers for word processing, computer-assisted instruction, and data base creation.

Among the students completing eighth grade at Peach Springs School in 1985, 100 percent graduated from high school or completed the general equivalency development (GED) program in 1990. More than 30 percent of these graduates have gone on to postsecondary education. Since 1988, only two students have dropped out of Peach Springs.

An Interagency, Experience-Based, Career/ Vocational Program—High School Through Postsecondary Education

The **Resource Apprenticeship Program for Students (RAPS)** began as a pilot project of the U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in 1987. The project was developed to address the inequitable representation of Alaska Natives in federal agencies responsible for managing Alaska's lands and resources. RAPS provides an opportunity for rural Alaska high school students to gain knowledge of and experience in resource management principles through employment and educational opportunities.

RAPS is a cooperative effort among students and their families, local schools, host employers, and funding agencies. Students are recommended for participation by their school principals on the basis of their math and science aptitude. Participants are linked to host agencies that include Alyeska Pipeline, Cadastral Surveys, U.S. Forest Service, and the NANA Regional Corporation. It is the responsibility of a host agency to provide work assignments, training, and supervision for the students. Because these work assignments are often in rural areas far away from a student's home,

the host agency will identify a host family. During their internship, students earn school credit toward high school graduation. All transportation costs, student stipends (\$5.00/hr), and room and board are provided by funding agencies (e.g., the Tlingit—Haida Central Council, BIA adult vocational education training funds, Job Training and Partnership Act).

Work assignments range from outdoor work at remote sites to work in a district research office. Students participate on a survey crew that works in the "bush"; work on archaeological digs or with wildlife biologists; and work with fish hatcheries. BLM provides counseling and financial support for students from their junior year in high school through college. Through a partnership with the University of Anchorage and the University of Fairbanks, participating RAPS students receive tuition waivers to attend these schools.

RAPS is in its fourth year and has 42 students. Five of these students are receiving tuition waivers at the universities they attend.

I WA'SIL—Adult Education and Dropout Reentry Programs

As a result of high dropout and unemployment rates, some of the most severe needs in Indian education are for adult services. Studies show that Indian GED-holders attend college at equal or greater rates than high school graduates. The United Indians of All Tribes Foundation in Seattle, Washington, sponsors a number of programs, including I WA'SIL, to address Indian adult education needs in the greater metropolitan area.

I WA'SIL means "to change" in the Salish language. The I WA'SIL philosophy is based on a whole-person approach to helping youth make positive transitions in their lives. The program, which serves 12-to-20-year-old homeless youth in downtown Seattle, has been in existence for almost 20 years. To avoid the need to refer people to other locations, I WA'SIL houses as many services as possible under one roof.

Services include an **Interagency Classroom** that offers tutoring for reentry to public school or GED preparation and testing and career guidance; **Outreach**, which provides personal counseling and follow-up to youth who are on the street full-time or at risk; **Alcohol and Drug Prevention, Counseling, and Treatment**, which uses Indian teaching methods to build self-esteem and give Indian

youth cultural roots that will help them break the cycle of addiction; **Juvenile Justice Advocacy and Assistance**, which works with youth, families, and the courts to keep young people out of detention; **Medical/Dental Services**, which are offered five days a week by an Indian Health Nurse; and **Recreational and Cultural Activities**, which include *Talking Circle: The Circle of Two Medicines* (group therapy), sweat-lodges, and field trips to wilderness areas.

The I WA'SIL program, which was originally founded in 1972, was forced to close eight times because of a lack of funding during its first decade. It has been operating continuously since 1982. Its programs are funded by a combination of state, county, and local municipal and school district support.

Over the past five years, the Interagency Classroom has served more than 350 young people with a 90 percent successful placement rate. Successful placement may include (1) returning students to their local school; (2) preparing them to pass the GED; (3) placing them in higher education or vocational training; and (4) helping them find employment. I WA'SIL staff provide follow-up support to students for three to four months after placement.

Zuni Public School District—Pueblo of Zuni

After 14 years of struggle to gain control over the education of Zuni children, the **Zuni Public School District** was established in January 1980. It is currently the only Indian-controlled public school district in New Mexico created expressly for an American Indian tribal group. The Zuni Public School boundaries are coterminous with the boundaries of the Zuni Indian Reservation. The Zuni people believe that Indians must control their own education if they are to have a positive impact upon the lives of tribal people, cultivate a competent tribal base of leadership, and develop the economics of tribes. After 10 years of operation, the Zuni Public School District has overcome many of the conditions that once characterized the Zuni schools as "the worst of the worst." The district is now involved in major educational restructuring, closely following the principles of the Coalition for Essential Schools.

Between 1980 and 1990, the dropout rate decreased from 46 percent to 7 percent and districtwide daily school attendance rates increased from 76 percent to 92 percent. High school ACT scores improved from a composite of 8.0 in 1980 to 16.4 in 1989. Scores of elementary children taking the 1990-91 fourth grade Direct Writing Assessment

scored a "holistic" average of 2.8 percent, compared with a statewide average of 2.5 percent. At all grade levels the number of students receiving recognition for academic achievement according to criteria established by the President's Academic Fitness Award has increased dramatically over the past four years.

Zuni Life Skills Development Project: During the 15 years prior to 1987, Zuni youth suicide rates were four times the national average. With Stanford University, the Zuni School District developed a culturally based suicide prevention program in 1987. Since then suicides among school-age youth have dropped from an average of four per year to none. The Zuni Life Skills Development Project includes a social competency development curriculum, an innovative teaching/learning model, and improved assessment and referral systems in schools and in the community for Zuni health and social services. These strategies have allowed educators, parents, and community agencies to respond rapidly to the issues of self-destructive behavior among students. At the same time, students are learning coping skills that are reinforced by Zuni perspectives and cultural attitudes against suicide.

Santa Fe Indian School, Santa Fe, New Mexico

The Santa Fe Indian School (SFIS) is administered by a school board composed of members appointed by the governors of the 19 Pueblo tribes of New Mexico. SFIS offers an academic and residential program at the middle school and senior high levels. The 100-acre campus is home to approximately 500 students from the 19 Pueblos tribes, the Navajo, Mescalero, Jicarilla, Hopi, and other tribes across the country. A majority of students come from communities within 60 miles of the school campus. Responding to the needs of tribal communities has been a priority since the school was first contracted in 1977.

The Santa Fe Indian School has a rich history dating back to the 1800s when it was one of two off-reservation boarding schools for students from southwestern Indian tribes. The school holds high expectations for all of its students. A full program of course offerings is available, including American Indian history and New Mexico history from an Indian perspective; actors' studio and silversmithing; and computer programming and other vocational studies. Students also have the opportunity to take courses at Santa Fe Technical High School and Los Alamos Laboratory.

The academic program is supplemented with many extracurricular activities and support services, some of

which are interwoven with the dormitory living experience. The **Evening Program**, a mandatory study hall for all students, provides an environment conducive to academic achievement outside the regular academic day. Students who fall behind are tutored in the **Guided Study** program. SFIS also offers extensive **Substance Abuse Counseling** and recreational programs. More than half of the student body participates in the athletic program; many teams have competed and won honors in the state and region. The **Learning Approaches Research Center**, a federally funded Title V program, enhances effective classroom instruction by working with staff to develop strategies to deal with individual learning styles. Parents are invited to seminars where they learn how to encourage their children's academic achievement at home.

Santa Fe Indian School has been recognized as exemplary by local, state, and federal agencies. Eighty-one percent of 1990 graduates planned to attend postsecondary schools. In 1990 graduates received more than \$265,000 worth of competitive scholarships from institutions that included New Mexico State University, Dartmouth College, Princeton University, Adams State University, and the University of New Mexico.

St. Regis-Mohawk Reservation

Strong community control and partnerships among tribes, school districts, colleges, and the state and federal governments can significantly improve education for Indian students. In the St. Regis-Mohawk area such a partnership has been evolving since 1968 and now is expressed in many programs, activities, and networks involving these organizations. The key to their success has been the stabilizing influence of the Education Committee and its clear focus on its mission, goals, and objectives. As a result of these program efforts, the high school dropout rate at Salmon River School has fallen from 67 percent in 1968 to 7 percent in 1990. Many adults have also completed GEDs and gone on to finish bachelor's and master's degrees through the State University of New York.

Prior to 1968, there was little inter-organizational communication or activity among St. Lawrence University, Salmon River School District, and the St. Regis-Mohawk Reservation, as each group was isolated by its private concerns. Only two Mohawk students attended St. Lawrence University. Ties between the school and the reservation were limited to the payroll and the students. There was little communication between Salmon River Central School District and St. Lawrence University.

Over the past 22 years, the Salmon River Central School District has begun to reach out to the community and to St. Lawrence University to meet the Mohawk educational needs. The Central School enrollment includes 39.1 percent American Indian students in grades 4-12. Many of the noninstructional personnel are Native. However, only six of the 120 teachers and one of the three guidance counselors are Native. The real breakthroughs tying the reservation and the school together came with the election of Mohawks to the school board (of which there are now three among a nine-person board) and the initiation of the Mohawk language and culture class for grades 3-9. Upon this base the school and the Mohawk leaders are building a new curriculum that incorporates more Native-related studies through Chapter 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Frequent communication now exists between various components of St. Lawrence University and the Salmon River Central School District and between the school district and various components of the St. Regis-Mohawk reservation.

Artist for the Final Report

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Ordering Information

The individual commissioned papers of the Indian Nations At Risk Task Force are available through ERIC Documents. Copies of this publication, the individual commissioned papers, and the complete set of papers in book form, *Indian Nations At Risk: Solutions for the 1990s*, are available from the Department of Education. For more information write to:

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